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[Despatch Abstract.]

Administration Report - Forest Panchayats - 1946-47

- Recorded.

Board of Revenue, Madras

Proceedings (Misc.) No. 5, Press, 18th February 1948

Administration Report—Forest panchayats—1946–47—Recorded—Government Order communicated.

V. S. HEJMADI, ESQ., I.C.S.,
Commissioner of Civil Supplies.

READ—the following papers:—

I

Returns received from the Collectors of all districts except Madras, Malabar, Tanjore and the Nilgiris.

II

Reference from the Board of Revenue, No. E. 4065/47-2, dated 15th January 1948.

V. S. HEJMADI, ESQ., I.C.S.,
Commissioner of Civil Supplies and Separate Revenue.

Read—Reports received from the Collectors of all districts except Madras, Malabar, Tanjore and the Nilgiris. Memorandum No 95950 C-I/47, Development, dated 25th December 1947.

Reference—No. E. 4065/47-2, *dated* 15*th January* 1948.

The Board submits to the Government its report on the administration of the forest panchayats in the Presidency for the year ending 30th June 1947.

2. During the year under report there were 868 panchayats managing an area of 3,069·02 square miles and paying an annual rent of Rs. 1,07,671–8–0 as against 908 panchayats managing an area of 3,078·39 square miles and paying a rent of Rs. 1,11,932–4–5 in the previous year. The following statement shows the number of panchayats in each district, the area managed by them and the rent payable to the Government by them:—

District.	Number of panchayats.	Area in square miles.	Rent. Rs.	A.	P.
Vizagapatam	7	30·12	477	0	0
East Godavari	4	7·45	210	0	0
West Godavari	15	71·90	1,435	0	0
Kistna	20	98·09	2,119	0	0
Guntur	52	172·18	8,028	0	0
Nellore	142	357·40	25,715	8	0
Cuddapah	48	187·44	4,510	0	0
Kurnool	22	117·72	4,665	0	0
Bellary	88	424·48	8,154	0	0
Anantapur	88	433·08	3,780	0	0
Chingleput	32	43·92	2,840	0	0
Chittoor	71	315·78	5,728	0	0
North Arcot	79	267·34	10,461	0	0
South Arcot	63	211·19	13,616	0	0
Trichinopoly	42	90·53	4,576	0	0
Madura	15	23·06	1,376	0	0
Ramnad	1	1·00	254	0	0
Tinnevelly	8	10·84	760	0	0
Salem	40	144·22	4,984	0	0
Coimbatore	21	58·24	3,983	0	0
South Kanara	10	3·04	..		
Total ..	868	3,069·02	1,07,671	8	0

3. In the Bellary district, the Metriki Forest Panchayat was split up into three separate panchayats, viz., Metriki, Vitlapuram and Laklahalle and the Chikanthapuram Forest Panchayat was bifurcated and a portion of it was handed over to the Kudithini Sheep Breeding Co-operative Society for its management. In Chingleput district, 33 panchayat forests were either transferred to the control of the Forest department or managed by the Revenue department. In the North Arcot district the Sennaleri and Enadavadi Reserves which were in charge of three panchayats were disreserved in Notification No. 139, dated 21st November 1946, published in the *Fort St. George Gazette*, dated 18th February 1947, and the panchayats thereafter ceased to function. In G.O. No. 1867, Development, dated 11th May 1945, the Government transferred the three other reserves in charge of seven forest panchayats to the control of the Forest department. In the Anantapur district, the number of reserves that are under the management of the Revenue department is 38 out of a total of 88 panchayat forests in the district.

The decrease in the lease amounts payable to the Government is due to (1) the transfer of certain panchayats to the control of the Forest department, and (2) the reduction made in the lease amounts payable by certain panchayats in the districts of Anantapur and Chittoor to compensate them for the loss of revenue on account of the transfer of control of "tangedu" sales to the Forest department with reference to G.O. Ms. No. 2248, Development, dated 20th September 1940. In a few deserving cases the lease amount was reduced for special reasons.

4. The work of renewing the agreements with the panchayats was not taken up by many Collectors in time as in the last year. Out of 278 agreements which expired by 30th June 1947, only 193 were renewed up to the end of September 1947. The remaining cases are reported to be under correspondence with the subordinate officers.

5. The number of cow-units fixed in the agreements executed by the forest panchayats was 660,999 as against 673,440 in the previous year. The incidence of grazing was 2·95 as against 2·92 in the previous year. The number of cow-units for which the panchayats issued permits in the year was 542,452 as against 556,284 in 1945–46, and 558,118 in 1944–45. The number of panchayats that issued permits in excess of the limit fixed in the agreements was 110 as against 90 in the previous year. In Anantapur and North Arcot districts the number of such panchayats that issued permits in excess of the limits is 19 and 27 respectively, while in Trichinopoly district the number was 16. The rates of grazing fees continued to be the same as in the previour year, and ranged from 1 anna to Rs. 3 per cow-unit.

6. One thousand, six hundred and ninty-six watchers were employed by the panchayats as against 1,756 in the previous year. The average area for each watcher comes to 1·81 square miles as against 1·73 square miles in the previous year. In G.O. Ms. No. 4498, Development, dated 16th September 1947, the Government have sanctioned a dearness allowance of Rs. 2 each per mensem to the watchers employed in the forest panchayats from the funds at the disposal of the panchayats concerned. In order to meet the extra cost involved on account of the grant of the dearness allowance, the Government have directed that economy in other items of expenditure of the panchayats should be effected to the possible extent and that the existing grazing fees of the panchayats should be enhanced, wherever possible. These orders have been

communicated to the Collectors and they have been instructed to submit proposals for increasing the grazing fees, wherever necessary. The Collectors have also been advised, wherever possible, to grant land under paragraph 15 (*b*) of B.S.O. No. 195-A to the watchers for temporary cultivation in order to supplement their pay and to stimulate their interest in the protection of these forests in their charge.

7. During the year under report, the number of offences detected by the panchayats was 17,424 out of which 13,615 were disposed of and compounding fees amounting to Rs. 73,587-14-3 were levied. The corresponding figures for the last year were 19,343, 15,873, and Rs. 74,711-3-6. Disposal of cases was good in Bellary, Chittoor, North Arcot and South Arcot, fair in Vizagapatam, Kurnool, Anantapur, Kistna, Chingleput, and East Godavari and poor in the remaining districts.

8. The number of panchayats empowered to compound offences was 33. All are reported to be exercising their powers judiciously.

9. Out of 868 panchayats working in the Presidency the working of 128 (14 per cent) panchayats is reported to be good, that of 508 (73 per cent) panchayats fair, and that of the remaining 232 (27 per cent) indifferent. The corresponding figures of the previous year were 75 (8 per cent), 501 (55 per cent), and 332 (36 per cent).

10. The total number of trees planted and kept alive at the end of the year under report was 29,735 as against 22,595 in the previous year. Two hundred and seventy-nine panchayats adopted measures to replace trees that died or were felled. Eight thousand nine hundred and fifty-three trees were planted to replace 14,653 trees that died or were felled. As compared with the figures for the previous year, the progress in this direction was poor and the reasons generally adduced by the Collectors for this poor progress are (*a*) that the soil in most cases is rocky, (*b*) that the rainfall is insufficient and (*c*) that most panchayat forests lack water facilities within easy reach. The interest evinced by almost all the panchayats in the matter of improvement was also poor as in the last year.

11. The system of rotational grazing was tried in the Solamanatham Forest Panchayat in the Vellore taluk of the North Arcot district and the Collector has reported that it is not working successfully. "Kumri" method of cultivation is being tried in the Palicherlapad Forest Panchayat of Rapur taluk of the Nellore district and an extent of 27 acres is under cultivation. A portion of 200 acres in the Bitragunta Forest Panchayat in the Kavali taluk of the Nellore district was recently leased out to the Three Districts Labour Classes Society, Kothapalem under the "kumri" method and the results are awaited. Under the "Grow More Food" scheme about 600 acres in the Ramanahalle Forest Panchayat in the Harur taluk of the Salem district have been leased out to the landless poor for cultivation of food crops. The ryots are reported to have cleared off the shrubs and sown crops in an extent of about 150 acres. Collective farming with the aid of a tractor has been ordered by the Board in this case and steps are being taken to introduce the system with the help of the Agricultural department. An extent of 200 acres in the Elathur Forest Panchayat in the Omalur taluk of the Salem district has been ordered to be leased out free of assessment to the ex-toddy tappers, Harijans and the landless poor in G.O. Ms. No. 4589, Development, dated 24th September 1947. An extent of 69·32 acres in the Konthanapalle Forest Panchayat in the Rayadrug taluk and 193 acres of land in the Harpanahalle taluk of the Bellary district were leased out under "kumri" method of cultivation and the areas were cultivated during 1946-47. The "taungya" method of cultivation was tried in the Kotur Forest Panchayat in the Bellary district; over an extent of 2 acres, about 300 pits were dug and margosa and tamarind seeds were dibbled. Many of them have come up well. A fencing has been put all round the area to protect the plants. The Collector of Bellary has reported that the system of rotational grazing has been ordered to be tried in the Joga Forest Panchayat in the Hospet taluk. Suitable areas in the Papinayakanahalli and Chiribe-Gajapuram Forest Panchayats in the Bellary district were selected for sowing of fodder grasses. The grass seeds supplied by the District Forest Officer, Anantapur, were sown very recently and the results are being watched. An extent of 211 acres in the Thachankurichi and Nedungur Forest Panchayats in the Lalgudi taluk was granted to 193 persons for cultivation of food crops under the "kumri" method. The "kumri" method tried in the Ganapavaram Forest Panchayat in the Kurnool district resulted in no appreciable progress. In the Thotapalle Forest Panchayat of the East Godavari district 6 mango trees, 200 pine-apple plants, 16 teak trees and one plantation garden were planted. They are reported to be thriving well. In the Rameswaram Forest Panchayat of the same district there are 65 mango trees, 1 jack tree, and 1 orange tree. The Presidents of the panchayats have been instructed by the Revenue Divisional Officer concerned to plant more teak and sandalwood plants and raise as many fruit bearing trees as possible. The "taungya" method of cultivation was continued in the Thondavada Forest Panchayat in the Chandragiri taluk of the Chittoor district.

12. During the year under report 101 panchayats sunk wells or repaired old ponds and wells at a cost of Rs. 7,829-0-3 as against an expenditure of Rs. 13,156-0-4 incurred by 110 panchayats in 1945-46. Fifty-eight panchayats effected other improvements at a cost of Rs. 2,260-13-2 as against Rs. 2,318-12-9 incurred by 25 panchayats in the previous year. Nine panchayats attended to the removal of prickly-pear during the year under report.

13. During the year under report the Collectors of 7 districts inspected 29 panchayats and the Revenue Divisional Officers 305 panchayats as against 47 panchayats by the Collectors of 8 districts and 214 panchayats by the Revenue Divisional Officers in the previous year. The Collector of Anantapur inspected 16 panchayats as against 23 panchayats in the last year. Inspections by Tahsildars, Deputy Tahsildars, Forest Panchayat Deputy Tahsildars and by Rangers is reported to be adequate. In its proceedings Mis. No. 1444, dated 16th October 1947, the Board also issued instructions to the Collectors in the matter of inspection of the forest panchayats by the Revenue Divisional Officers. They are to the effect that in districts with less than 50 forest panchayats the inspection should be made by the Revenue Divisional Officers in accordance with the instructions in B.S.O. No. 195-A, paragraph 14, i.e., each panchayat should be inspected by the Revenue Divisional Officer once in every 6 months and that in other districts with more than 50 panchayats, the Revenue Divisional Officer should inspect all inefficient and badly managed panchayats and also as many of the forests as possible during the course of his tour.

14. Two plots of 2 acres each were allotted to the watchers employed in the Vavveru Forest Panchayat in the Kovur taluk of the Nellore district for cultivation under B.S.O. No. 195-A, paragraph 15 (*b*) to induce them to protect the forest with greater zeal. The lands already granted to the forest panchayat watchers in the Udayarpalayam taluk of the Trichinopoly district have been cultivated with food crops with the exception of Alavoi Panchayat. The lands granted to the watchers in the other taluks were not brought under cultivation either on account of the poor nature of the soil or on account of the depredations of wild beasts and damage to crops by pigs and deer.

15. The following statement shows the demand, collection and balance of rents payable to the Government during the year:—

Demand.		Collection.		Balance.	
Arrear.	Current.	Arrear.	Current.	Arrear.	Current.
RS. A. P.	RS. A. P.	RS. A. P.	RS. A. P.	RS. A. P.	RS. A. P.
3,971 5 0	1,07,078 14 0	3,597 5 0	1,02,714 4 0	374 0 0	4,364 10 0

Collection work was good in West Godavari, Kurnool, Bellary, Anantapur, North Arcot, Ramnad, Tinnevelly and South Kanara, while the balances were heavy in the districts of Guntur, Nellore, Chingleput and Trichinopoly.

16. The following statement shows the financial particulars of the panchayats for the year ending 30th June 1947 :—

Number of panchayats	868		
Total income of the panchayats	Rs. 4,22,947	0	8
Number of panchayats that had cash balance at the beginning of the year	807		
Total cash balance at the beginning of the year	Rs. 3,47,762	4	9
Total amount at the disposal of the panchayats	Rs. 7,70,709	5	5
Total expenditure during the year	Rs. 3,28,436	2	1
Balance	Rs. 4,42,273	3	4
Number of panchayats that had cash balance at the close of the year	805		

The financial position of the panchayats taken as a whole during the period from 1940–41 to 1946–47 was as follows :—

Year.	Number of panchayats.	Total receipts.			Cash balance.		
		RS.	A.	P.	RS.	A.	P.
1940–41	942	3,49,212	14	11	1,45,226	13	1
1941–42	942	3,30,136	5	9	1,42,666	9	4
1942–43	936	3,49,466	8	7	1,53,966	10	10
1943–44	925	4,02,417	5	10	2,13,721	12	1
1944–45	918	4,14,701	12	9	2,93,922	8	4
1945–46	908	3,94,633	1	2	3,54,377	13	9
1946–47	868	4,22,947	0	8	3,47,762	4	9

Though the statistics reveal some improvement in the financial position there are many panchayats which have not sufficient funds at their disposal even to maintain the requisite number of watchers, while some have large surplus funds as in the previous year. As the Government have since granted a dearness allowance to the watchers from the panchayats' funds with a direction to meet the cost by effecting economics in other items of expenditure and by enhancing the rates of grazing fees if necessary the Collectors have been instructed to submit proposals for the enhancement of grazing fees wherever necessary.

17. The temporary Taluk Surveyor sanctioned in G.O. Ms. No. 3198, Development, dated 21st July 1944, for attending to the arrears of work in the Nellore district continued to work this year also. In G.O. Ms. No. 4120, Development, dated 2nd November 1946, the Government have sanctioned for the Bellary district two surveyors and four chainmen to attend to the survey and demarcation work in the panchayat forests in connexion with the sale of major fuel coupes in them. In the Nellore district, the Board has recommended an enhancement in the present fixed travelling allowance of the forest panchayat surveyor from Rs. 26–4–0 to Rs. 36 in view of his vast jurisdiction over 10 taluks. The sanction of the Government is awaited.

18. *General.*—The question of future policy of the forest panchayats is still under the consideration of the Government. The Board would, in this connexion, invite their attention to its reference No. E-4344/44–13, dated 18th October 1946 to the Chief Conservator of Forests (copy already submitted to the Government) which contain detailed remarks of the Board in the matter.

During the year under report the Government have sanctioned piecemeal transfer of certain forest panchayats in the districts of Nellore, Vizagapatam and Chingleput to the control of the Forest department. Nevertheless, early orders of the Government are necessary on the general question, as the present uncertainty in regard to the future policy may result in the further deterioration of the forests under the panchayat management.

In view of the numerous petitions received by the Board and by the Government asking for elections in the place of nomination and vice versa, the Board sought the specific instructions of the Government as to what the policy should be in dealing with inefficient elected panchayats and whether with reference to B.S.O. No. 195-A, paragraph 5 (iii) as amended by correction slip No. 52, dated 9th November 1934 the Collectors could continue to exercise the discretion vested in them to suspend the elective method and to nominate panchayatdars in constituting forest panchayats. In their order Ms. No. 5377, Development, dated 20th November 1947 the Government have directed that generally elections should be held and that the elective method should be suspended only when it is found absolutely necessary for the efficient management of the panchayat.

The effect of this policy on the working of the panchayats will be watched and reported on in the next Administration Report.

C. A. RAMAKRISHNAN,
Joint Secretary.

To the Secretary to Government, Development Department (with the Statements).

III

G.O. Ms. No. 547, Development, dated 5th February 1948.

Read—the following :—

Reference from the Board of Revenue, No. E. 4065/47–2, dated the 15th January 1948.

Order—No. 547, *Development, dated 5th February* 1948.

Recorded.

(By order of His Excellency the Governor)

K. G. MENON,
Secretary to Government.

To the Board of Revenue.
„ Chief Conservator of Forests (with enclosure).

Resolution—(Misc.) No. 5, Press, dated 18th February 1948.

Communicated to the Collectors of all districts except Madras, Malabar, Tanjore and the Nilgiris.

2. The attention of the Collectors is invited to the concluding sentence of the Administration Report and they are requested to report the effect of the policy referred to therein on the working of the panchayats in their districts while submitting their Administration Reports due for 1947–48.

N. SUBRAMANIYA AYYAR,
Assistant Secretary.

(True extract)

To the Collectors of all districts except Madras, Malabar, Tanjore and the Nilgiris.
Copy to the Secretary to Government, Development Department (2 copies).
Copy to the Chief Conservator of Forests, Madras 8.
Copy to the Secretary, Ceded Districts Economic Development Board, Madras.